

# AETC News Clips



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14 Dec 01

MySanAntonio : Military

Military

## House approves another BRAC

**By Gary Martin**

Express-News Washington Bureau

**Web Posted :** 12/14/2001 12:00 AM

WASHINGTON — The House dropped its opposition to a 2005 round of base closures Thursday and passed a \$343 billion defense bill that San Antonio leaders said will force them to begin a defense of the city's vulnerable military installations.

President Bush sought another round of base closures to trim spending on unneeded bases and release funds the Pentagon said could be used for necessary weaponry and the administration's missile defense program.

While the Senate signaled its willingness to carry out another round of cuts, stalwarts in the House had blocked base closure measures until the issue threatened to hold up passage of the bill as Congress rushes to recess for the holidays.

The bill passed on a 382-40 vote. The only Texan to vote against the bill was Rep. Ron Paul, R-Surfside, who routinely votes against all spending and authorization legislation.

"I really had to hold my nose on this one," said Rep. Ciro Rodriguez, D-San Antonio, a member of the House Armed Services Committee.

Because of the loss of Kelly AFB and 16,000 jobs in the 1995 closure round, Rodriguez said San Antonio is prepared to defend its four remaining military bases from a future round of cuts.

"But we have to go back and enhance what we've got," he said.

Base closure proponents considered the House the last major hurdle for base closures.

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A compromise in a House-Senate conference committee pushed back a 2003 round to 2005 to win approval by lawmakers in the lower legislative body.

The bill calls for the president, with the consent of Congress, to appoint a nine-member base realignment and closure commission, known by the initials BRAC, by March 2005. The panel then would review a list of bases selected by the defense secretary for closure.

A majority of the commission could vote to remove a base from consideration. An addition would require seven votes.

The president could approve or reject the list, but would be prohibited from adding or subtracting bases for consideration.

Congress would have to approve or reject the list of selections with an up or down vote.

That process is similar to previous rounds of closures from 1988 to 1995 that shuttered 97 major installations and 200 smaller facilities for a one-time savings of \$14 billion, and recurring savings of \$6 billion a year after 2001 when all actions are completed, according to the General Accounting Office.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said he was "very disappointed" that Congress pushed back the next round of closures from 2003 to 2005.

"What that means, very simply, is that the United States will continue to have something like 20 percent to 25 percent more bases than we need," Rumsfeld told a Pentagon news conference.

Rumsfeld said the government will be wasting money on unneeded bases that could be used to fight the war on terrorism, "and it's a shame."

The defense secretary held out the possibility he will recommend a presidential veto to force the Congress to move the base closure process up.

He said he will make that decision after Defense Department officials review the defense bill.

Meanwhile, South Texas officials are wary about several military installations.

The Coastal Bend is concerned the Navy could seek to consolidate mine warfare missions at Ingleside Naval Station, which would make the newly built port vulnerable to closure.

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Brooks AFB in San Antonio, a research facility, barely survived base closure scrutiny in 1995 and is a likely target for future rounds of closures.

San Antonio and the city's chamber of commerce are preparing a task force and lobbying campaign that is likely to rival the \$1 million effort during the 1993 and 1995 rounds.

Federal military spending pumps about \$3.5 billion a year into the San Antonio economy, said Joe Krier, president of the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce.

That figure includes program funding that is funneled into four existing bases and two hospitals that serve a large military retirement community.

San Antonio has tried to protect Brooks from a closure commission, moving in recent years to take over maintenance of the campus-like facility that shifts the funding burden from the Air Force to city taxpayers.

"The payroll at Brooks is a couple of million bucks. It's not peanuts,"

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Krier said.

San Antonio also is seeking to locate U.S. Army missions from Fort Buchanan in Puerto Rico to Fort Sam Houston to better protect that base from closure.

"I think Fort Sam Houston and the rest of the bases are OK," Rodriguez said. "But it's too early to speculate. We cannot rest on what we've accomplished."

House members who opposed base closures said they were forced to vote for the defense bill because of numerous items, including a 5 percent to 10 percent pay raise for every member of the armed services.

The bill includes a boost in spending to improve dilapidated family housing and provide other benefits.

In addition, lawmakers tucked anti-terror measures into the legislation to boost readiness and response against attacks such as those Sept. 11

"It's hard to vote against the war on terrorism," said Rep. Lamar Smith, R-San Antonio. "And we wanted to vote for the pay raises."

Smith said he expects future votes on establishing a base closure commission, as Congress prepares for the politically painful process of cutting bases in communities that they represent.

"It's not certain," Smith said of a base closure round. "And quite frankly, I still don't think it's going to happen."

Others, however, prepared for the inevitability.

Rep. Solomon Ortiz, D-Corpus Christi, used his clout on the House Armed Services Committee to add numerous programs to military bases in the Coastal Bend region of Texas.

"In the event we will face a BRAC in the next five years, the work we did today will go a long way in supplementing our bases," Ortiz said.

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# Tape of bin Laden leaves no questions

The Bush administration has more than a smoking gun in the videotape released Thursday showing Osama bin Laden gleefully discussing the Sept. 11 attack with a small group of supporters.

The president also has a public relations weapon that destroys bin Laden's credibility throughout the world and marks him as one of history's most cold-blooded villains.

Even before the tape, there was little doubt that bin Laden was culpable in the mass murder on American soil three months ago. But bin Laden's demeanor on the videotape — his laughter over the deaths of Americans and his sickening piety — is shocking. To watch it is to marvel at one man's inhumanity.

Much of what he says in the tape was revealed previously in news reports. However, he also described how he calculated in advance "the number of casualties from the enemy who would be killed based on the position of the tower."

To hear him leaves little doubt that bin Laden not only was the grand architect of the attack on America but also was involved in the most minute details of its execution.

"Due to my experience in this field," he told his friends, "I was thinking that the fire from the gas in the plane would melt the iron structure of the building and collapse the area where the plane hit and all the floors above it only."

When he found out that both towers collapsed, he and his brothers were "overjoyed."

Such perverse joy no doubt will be difficult for the families who lost loved ones Sept. 11 to stomach. To hear with our own ears and to see with our own eyes bin Laden's laughing about America's loss is

To watch bin Laden's laughter and glee is to marvel at one man's inhumanity.



EITAN HESS ASHKENAZI/ASSOCIATED PRESS

The videotape released by the Pentagon is evidence Osama bin Laden bears blame for the terrorist attacks.

heartbreaking. But it is necessary.

The tape shows that bin Laden bears more blame than the young men who actually hijacked the airplanes Sept. 11. Some of the hijackers did not know the extent of the murder they were about to commit. Bin Laden did.

"All they knew was that they have a martyrdom operation and we asked each of them to go to America, but they didn't know about the operation, not even one letter," Bin Laden says on the tape, proudly.

Those who see this videotape in the Arab world now must understand why President Bush speaks for all civilized people when he says you're either with bin Laden and the terrorists or you are with America.

Justice cannot come swiftly enough for this vile man.



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## Altus AFB OK Newsclips

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# Task force seeks funding to fight base closures

By Scott Cooper  
Staff Writer

McALESTER — A legislative task force aimed at preventing any state military facility from closing wants \$4 million in state appropriations and soon. It decided Wednesday to ask the governor to request the money in a special session.

The Oklahoma Military Base Closure Prevention Task Force will ask the Legislature for \$4 million to help military communities fight the possible closing of bases in the state. The money also would

go toward implementing a job-training program at each facility.

Meeting at the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant, the task force attached an amendment asking that the measures be considered in a special session.

"The quicker we start the better we are," said task force Chairman Rep. David Braddock, D-Altus. "I think we need to press forward."

The task force approved one resolution that calls for giving each Oklahoma military community — Enid, Altus, Lawton.

McAlester and Midwest City — \$250,000 as "seed" money to aid communities as the Department of Defense, the federal government and Congress begin to look at bases to close. While members said many details would be worked out during the legislative process, the committee voiced its intent to let sub-

government entities — such as the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments — oversee the spending.

A second resolution asks for \$2.75 million to set up education and job-training programs. Committee members said such programs would impress a Base Realignment and Closure panel.

The seed money would be spent at the discretion of each community, although the task force members anticipate strict guidelines.

"The communities are going to spend much more money than we will," Braddock said. "I felt the state would help jumpstart this process."

A congressional conference committee Tuesday approved another round of base closings in 2005. While the action, awaiting final House and Senate approval, would move back the closings from 2003 as the Bush administration wanted, task force members still felt a need for urgency to secure funds and implement programs.

"If communities think there is more time, that would be a mistake," said Enid businessman and committee member Bob Berry. "If by the end of 2003, you haven't fixed what's wrong with your town, you're toast."

Berry read a report on what a new base closure committee may be looking for when considering which bases should remain open. The report comes from Berry's inquiries with Defense Department officials, he said. Berry said the issues deal with quality of life.

At the top of the list was common education, followed by, in order of importance, higher education and vo-tech; medical services; spouse employment; housing; air service; and community-based services such as recreation centers and churches.

The \$1.25 million requested for seed money could change as needs are assessed and more is revealed about the committee, its guidelines and word of which bases are being considered. Members said they could funnel more money where it is needed.

"If we knew Fort Sill was invulnerable and Vance and Altus

were vulnerable, I would vote to give them all the money," said retired Army Maj. Gen. Leo Baxter, a committee member from Lawton.

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## Altus AFB OK Newsclips

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Members had considered asking for the use of state Rainy Day funds, but Rep. Ron Kirby, D-Lawton, said those funds would not be available until at least June. After the last task force meeting in October where talk surfaced of asking for a special session, Gov. Frank Keating's office said it would consider the request when made but opposed using Rainy Day funds.

Oklahoma's military facilities — Vance Air Force Base in Enid, Fort Sill in Lawton, Tinker Air Force Base in Midwest City, Altus Air Force Base and the McAlester plant — have survived previous base closure commissions.

Some bases have flourished from other base closings, gaining additional operations. Tinker just completed the final phase of moving operations from Kelly Air Force Base in Texas, while McAlester gained the Army's Defense Ammunition Center from Savanna Army Depot in Illinois.

Committee members said money could be used to beef up a state facility's chances of gaining other operations. But first, they've got to keep them open.

"The next three years are the most important for Oklahoma military bases ever," Braddock said.

The McAlester meeting was the first to take place at one of the military facilities.

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# Deal reached on base closings

**Carolyn Skorneck**  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House Armed Services Committee's leaders cajoled reluctant colleagues Wednesday into endorsing a round of base closings, as demanded by President Bush, to enable the \$343.3 billion defense authorization bill to move ahead.

## Sheppard thought to be safe

The round would not occur until 2005, two years later than the administration requested. The compromise reached by leaders of the Senate and House Armed Services committees late last week was intended to get the bill moving and erase the possibility of a Bush veto.

The legislation authorizes spending for the Defense Department and military efforts of the Energy Department for the budget year that began Oct. 1.

"With our men and women putting their lives at risk, they need all of the resources that we can give them, and it's inexcusable that we would maintain bases that are not needed when we've got people putting their lives on the line," said Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., chairman of the Senate committee.

The defense bill agreed to Wednesday by House negotiators — and Tuesday by their

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Sheppard AFB, Wichita Falls, Texas  
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Senate counterparts — contains important programs for service members: minimum 5 percent across-the-board pay raises, with up to 10 percent increases for some; new housing benefits; more help with moving expenses.

Bush won not only his demand for a base closings round, but full funding of his \$8.3 billion request for his prized missile defense plan, a \$3.1 billion increase over 2001. Of the \$8.3 billion, the president can use \$1.3 billion for anti-terrorism instead, as the Senate had authorized.

Separate anti-terrorism spending totals \$7 billion, a \$1 billion increase from 2001.

The full House and Senate must pass the final version before it can go to Bush. The House was expected to consider the bill today.

The administration contends up to one-fourth of base structure is not needed, and closing excess facilities would save about \$3.5 billion a year. Some lawmakers are skeptical about touted savings.

It was unclear if the administration accepts the 2005 round.

Pentagon spokeswoman Victoria Clarke, asked if Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld might still recommend a veto over it, said Wednesday: "I can say they're working hard on the issue right now."

The issue caused a month-long standoff between House and Senate negotiators reconciling their two versions of the defense bill. The Republican-led House adamantly opposed a 2003 round of base closings the administration sought, the Democratic-led Senate endorsed it.

Yet over the course of a half-dozen meetings involving the chairmen — Levin and Rep. Bob Stump, R-Ariz. — and the top minority members — Sen. John Warner, R-Va., and Rep. Ike Skelton, D-Mo. — the House leaders came up with a compromise of one round in 2005.

"Everybody's expressed concern that we should not be doing this while we're at war," Stump said, explaining how he sold the deal to House colleagues. "The economy is down, but by 2005 it might improve somewhat. I laid it out, gave them the facts. I think everybody realizes we were putting passage of the bill in jeopardy."

Ultimately, Stump said, only a few did not sign on.

The president, in consultation with congressional leaders, would appoint the nine-member base closing commission in March 2005. That May, the defense secretary would submit a list of facilities to be closed.

It would take seven members to add a facility to that list, but just a simple majority to remove one. The president could approve that list and send it to Congress, or reject it and send it back to the commission. Neither Congress nor the president could make changes to the list.

Sheppard Air Force Base has little reason to fear a shutdown, Board of Commerce and Industry President Tim Chase said.

"I do not believe Sheppard is at risk," he said. "We're well-aware of the fact the feds are looking at doing another round. We're not complacent in any way, shape or form."

When Air Force bases closed in Illinois and Colorado in earlier waves of shutdowns, Chase said Wichita Falls benefited by inheriting their training programs.

"If your base is efficient in what it does, you very well might be a beneficiary," he said. "We work very close with the leadership of the base, and we look at the points where Sheppard Air Force Base and the community touch. We make sure those points are efficient, effective and well cared for."

State Rep. David Farabee called SAFB "vital to the safety of our nation" and "integral to our economy."

"I will work closely with Congressman (Mac) Thornberry to assure that Sheppard Air Force Base and the importance of its mission is known by all that are involved in the next round of hearings," he said.

Previous closing rounds — in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995 — led to closure or realignment of 451 installations, including 97 major ones.

As the administration requested, the negotiators canceled the January referendum in Vieques on future use of that Puerto Rican island for military training. Anti-Navy protests broke out after off-target bombs killed a civilian guard in 1999. Bush has promised to end the maneuvers by 2003.

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# Burger King aims high with SAFB location

**Lynda Stringer**  
Times Record News

The glow of a Burger King sign is lighting up the pre-dawn sky this morning as Sheppard Air Force Base's first freestanding fast food franchise opens its doors.

The aroma of BK's signature Croissant'wich, Cini-mini's and fresh coffee will draw hungry airmen to the grand opening at 6 a.m.

The opening of the Burger King continues the growing trend of "bringing brand name fast food to the military," AAFES senior business program manager Lee Wiederkehr said.

Most military folks can remember when military installations featured just the BX, the PX, the Commissary, the Shoppette, generic snack bars and the mess hall. They were all painted the same color as other buildings on base, so an off-base franchise on base is a welcome sight.

"It's great for them," Wiederkehr said. "It's like, 'Oh boy, I can enjoy my Whopper.'"

AAFES, which was established in 1895, has been in the name brand business since 1984 when it purchased its first Burger King franchise in Germany. Today AAFES has 179 BK stores at military installations worldwide, including Bosnia, Kosovo and Turkey.

"In those countries, we're really the only name brand fast food, even off base," Wiederkehr said.

The new restaurant, which replaces the tiny BK express located inside the Base Exchange, is also the first of the Army and Air Force Exchange Service's BK franchises worldwide — and of the off-base Burger Kings — to feature the company's new kitchen and drive-thru designs.

The kitchen features two stations: one is for steaming buns, the other boasts a new broiler and meat holder with three different speed settings to cook different items at the same time.

The new drive-thru features two menu boards that switch from breakfast to lunch menus and an ordering station that shows what the customer ordered and the price.

Construction of the Burger King at Sheppard, which also features the company's latest indoor playground design, was completed late last week. Employees were closing up the old location Wednesday while a cleaning crew made the place shine.

They invited 400 service members to eat free Monday and Tuesday for a test run during the breakfast, lunch and dinner rush hours to give the crew some practice. The showing was a lackluster 40 percent, but store manager Daisy Finnegan is expecting a healthy crowd today.

"They can't wait," Finnegan said. "They're happy to see a big store with a drive-thru."

Luverne Quemuel, who is with AAFES Central Region, is at Sheppard to help get the store underway. She said while Burger King is the flagship of the AAFES venture into brand name fast food, they've bought many other franchises as well, including Taco Bell, Pizza Hut and Popeye's.

"We're trying to bring a little bit of home to the troops," Quemuel said. "We even have a mobile Burger King. Wherever they are, we are."

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Harry Tonemah/Times Record News  
Daisy Finnegan, store manager of the Burger King on Sheppard Air Force Base, places plastic pans into a state-of-the-art, first-of-its-kind broiler. The store is the first to install the cooker in the entire Army and Air Force Exchange Service worldwide. The cooker is so new that none of the Wichita Falls Burger Kings have one.

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## ARIZONA AT WORK



Photos by Tim Koors

Former U.S. Air Force pilot Brian Udell describes how he ejected from his F-15 Strike Eagle at supersonic speed.

# Plant perfects ejection seats

By Brahm Resnik  
The Arizona Republic

Brian Udell's disabled fighter jet was hurtling toward Earth. One second more was too long to wait for his desperate decision: bail out at more than 760 mph or try to save the out-of-control aircraft.

"When I pulled those handles, you're making that choice, 'Hey, we're trying to save our lives here,'" he re-

## ON 12 NEWS

Watch Arizona Republic reporter Brahm Resnik's business reports on 12 News at 5, 6 and 11 a.m. weekdays.

Resnik can be reached at brahm.resnik@arizonarepublic.com or (602) 444-9727



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## Arizona Republic

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Wearing his old green Air Force jumpsuit, Udell sits in an ejection seat almost identical to the one in his F-15 Strike Eagle that night six years ago over the inky Atlantic Ocean.

Here at the Universal Propulsion Company, or UPCO, plant in a desolate area of north Phoenix, a dozen or so workers who make those ejection seats haven't heard Udell's story before. No other U.S. pilot has survived an ejection at the speed of sound. The wind blast when Udell ejected was like "hitting a freight train."

"It ripped my helmet and mask right off my head, blew the earplugs right out of my ear, broke all the blood vessels in my head and face," Udell said.

Udell is retelling the story for a reporter. But as he talks, the whirring of the drills winds down. The intermittent pounding stops. The workers suddenly are a rapt audience.

UPCO President Jeff Yaker says safety is always first for workers throughout the aerospace industry. But with Americans fighting in Afghanistan, the risks today are ever present.

"You've always got somebody's butt in your seat," said Hal Watson, an ejection seat mechanic.

UPCO, a division of Charlotte, N.C.-based Goodrich Corp., makes most of the ejection seats in the world's military aircraft. The seat is a marvel of rocketry. Once a pilot pulls the emergency handle, about 300 pyrotechnic devices must fire in sequence; in just 1.8 seconds the pilot is out of the jet and under a parachute.

First, the pilot is pulled back into the seat. Then the jet canopy is jettisoned. A catapult fires to lift the seat about four feet up a side rail and clear of the cockpit. Only then do rockets under the seat launch the pilot away from the jet.

## Universal Propulsion Company

25401 N. Central Ave.,  
Phoenix

**Business:** UPCO is the leading maker of ejection seats for military jets. Used on F-15, F-16, B1B, B-2, F-117 and A-10 aircraft. Division of Goodrich Corp.

**On the job:** Workers do final assembly of seats starting with frame; develop and make propellants used on seats.

**In the news:** Recently won contract for F-22 Raptor seats.

**Outlook:** Developing SmartBelt, inflatable seat belt for vehicles and aircraft.

**Employment:** 300.

[www.upco.goodrich.com](http://www.upco.goodrich.com)

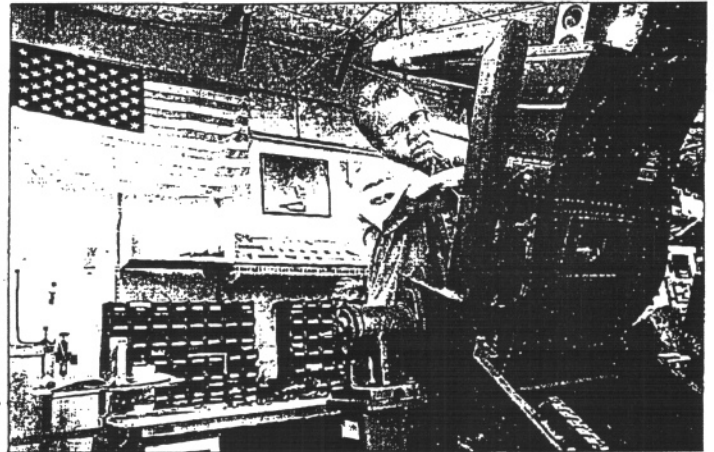
signs for a "smart seat" are in the works, Yaker says. Old analog devices on the current generation of seats take readings of air speed and altitude, but they translate the information into just three kinds of ejection. Newer computers, Yaker says, will be more precise and flexible.

With more female pilots, that flexibility is vital. Pilots can weigh anywhere from 110 pounds to 275 pounds with 25 pounds of pilot gear on. "Today the seats are one size fits all," Yaker says.

The other challenge: reducing injuries from "flail." Winds can blast pilots' arms and legs out of the constraints of the seat immediately after ejection. The wind drove Udell's left leg into a side restraining bar and bent the bar back 45 degrees. That leg snapped when it couldn't go any farther, his other leg was nearly severed and one arm was thrown back and broken at the elbow.

Pilots are told they shouldn't expect to survive ejection at supersonic speeds. The weapons officer on Udell's two-seat jet didn't make it.

"I owe my life to you guys," said Udell, now a pi-



Steve Lloyd of Glendale works on an ejection seat at Goodrich's UPCO plant in north Phoenix.

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# House, Senate negotiate base closure round

## ► Compromise needs approval of Congress

Staff and wire reports

WASHINGTON — After steadfastly holding out against base closings, House negotiators on the crucial \$343.3 billion defense authorization bill agreed Wednesday to a single round as demanded by President Bush.

The base-closings round would not occur until 2005, two years later

than the administration requested, under a compromise reached by leaders of Senate and House Armed Services committees late last week to get the bill moving and erase the possibility of a Bush veto.



President Bush

The compromise, while approved by House-Senate Conference Committee, must be OK'd by full House and Senate.

Former Enid Mayor Mike Cooper said the importance of that measure is it sets a definite time for the next base-closing round.

The community now has time to work on issues that could be detrimental against Vance Air Force Base during the next inspection related to the base-closing process.

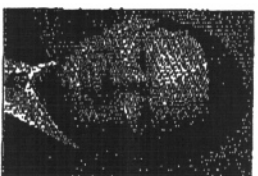
"In Enid, those are infrastructure and quality-of-care issues, particularly education, access to health care and affordable, available housing," he said. "Those are quality-of-life issues."

Enid also works with the state

congressional delegation to make sure Vance receives funding for military construction.

"Our purpose is two-fold, military construction dollars and quality-of-life issues," he said.

The conference committee agreed to the compromise by saying 2005 but must "sell" that



Mike Cooper

to the full House and Senate for approval, Cooper said. Final

approval would come by the end of the week or the first of next week as Congress labors toward ending the session by Christmas.

"If the next round is 2005, we only have 2003 and 2004 to make an impact," Cooper said.

Congress will establish a Base Closure and Realignment Committee in 2004, and whatever improvements are not done prior to that will not be considered, Cooper said.

The issue caused a monthlong standoff between House and Senate negotiators trying to reconcile their

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## CLOSURE

Continued from Page A1

two versions of the defense authorization bill for fiscal 2002, which began Oct. 1.

The overall defense bill agreed to Wednesday by House negotiators, and Tuesday by their Senate counterparts, contains many programs of importance to the military. They include minimum 5 percent across-the-board pay raises, with up to 10 percent increases for some; new housing benefits, and more help with moving expenses.

Anti-terrorism spending totals about \$7 billion, up \$1 billion from 2001.

Bush won not only on his demand for a round of base closings, but full funding of his \$8.3 billion request for his prized missile defense plan, a \$3.1 billion increase over spending in 2001.

The Senate had authorized the full \$8.3 billion, while allowing \$1.3 billion of it to be used for anti-terrorism efforts instead. The House had offered only \$7.9 billion. Conferees adopted the Senate's plan.

The negotiators agreed with the administration's request to cancel the January referendum in Vieques on future use of that Puerto Rican island for military training. Anti-

**"In Enid, those are infrastructure and quality-of-care issues, particularly education, access to health care and affordable, available housing."**

— Mike Cooper

Navy protest erupted there after off-target bombs killed a civilian guard in 1999. The Navy has used inert ammunition since then. Bush has promised to end the maneuvers by 2003.

The bill would prevent the Navy secretary from closing the facility until he certifies that a site or sites providing "equivalent or superior" levels of training will be available. If the Vieques facilities are closed, the land would be transferred to the Department of the Interior.

Both the full House and Senate must pass the final version of the defense authorization bill before it can go to President Bush for his signature.

The Bush administration insists some bases must be closed, saying one-fifth to one-fourth of base structure is not needed, and closing excess facilities would save \$3.5 billion or so a year.

The 2005 date puts the next round into a new presidential term and two House elections away.

Lawmakers said that would provide the time needed to determine exactly what military force is needed to fight the new wars of the 21st century. And the conferees placed many requirements on the administration before it can call for the closings.

Among other things, the defense secretary must submit a detailed force structure plan in 2004 and an infrastructure inventory that supports future military needs, and he must certify that closings are needed and justified in light of those findings.

Military needs such as readiness and training would be the primary factors in the evaluation to ensure training space is not sacrificed to short-term savings.

# Statewide group is up to the task

## ► Legislative backing sought for Oklahoma's military installations

By Robert Barron  
Staff Writer

Oklahoma communities with military bases could receive state funding to help plan strategies for protecting bases and fund educational programs.

Resolutions asking the state Legislature for up to \$3 million were approved by Oklahoma Military Base Closure Task Force, which met Wednesday in McAlester, said Enid's Mike Cooper, task force co-chairman.

"Both resolutions were approved with the understanding the governor will ask them to be included in the next special session," Cooper said.

The first resolution asked for a total of \$2.75 million for job training, education and other expenditures related to job training and education for military personnel. Those funds would include telecommunications infrastructure, institutional support and collaborative initiatives.

The second resolution was introduced and approved during Wednesday's meeting.

Cooper said the resolution would ask the Legislature to provide up to \$250,000 to communi-

ties housing military bases in Oklahoma for long-range planning and preparation to fight the base-closing process.

U.S. House and Senate negotiators in Washington, D.C., struck an agreement Wednesday that would see one more round of base closings in 2005.

Five cities in the state house military installations — Oklahoma City, Lawton, Altus, McAlester and Enid.

The next task force meeting will be in January at Vance Air Force Base.

"We're going to each location so we can understand what areas of concern for each of those bases are," said Cooper. "We're trying to protect them from closure but to also gain from any realignment of bases."

Each Oklahoma base has different duties, he

**"We're trying to protect them from closure but to also gain from any realignment of bases."**

—Mike Cooper

said.

Wednesday's meeting had been postponed last month due to a snowstorm.

Wednesday's meeting included a tour of the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant, discussions about the military's opportunities for Oklahoma prosperity in the future and discussion of recommendations for job training and community planning and preparedness.

Wednesday's meeting was the second of a series of meetings by the task force. Enid businessman Bob Berry and state Rep. Curt Roggow, R-Enid, also are members of the task force.



# Task force seeks funding to fight base closures

**By Scott Cooper**  
Staff Writer

**McALESTER** — A legislative task force aimed at preventing any state military facility from closing wants \$4 million in state appropriations and soon. It decided Wednesday to ask the governor to request the money in a special session.

The Oklahoma Military Base Closure Prevention Task Force will ask the Legislature for \$4 million to help military communities fight the possible closing of bases in the state. The money also would

go toward implementing a job-training program at each facility.

Meeting at the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant, the task force attached an amendment asking that the measures be considered in a special session.

"The quicker we start the better we are," said task force Chairman Rep. David Braddock, D-Altus. "I think we need to press forward."

The task force approved one resolution that calls for giving each Oklahoma military community — Enid, Altus, Lawton,

## Base support

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**McAlester and Midwest City** — \$250,000 as "seed" money to aid communities as the Department of Defense, the federal government and Congress begin to look at bases to close. While members said many details would be worked out during the legislative process, the committee voiced its intent to let sub-

government entities — such as the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments — oversee the spending.

A second resolution asks for \$2.75 million to set up education and job-training programs. Committee members said such programs would impress a Base Realignment and Closure panel.

The seed money would be spent at the discretion of each community, although the task force members anticipate strict

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guidelines.

"The communities are going to spend much more money than we will," Braddock said. "I felt the state would help jump start this process."

A congressional conference committee Tuesday approved another round of base closings in 2005. While the action, awaiting final House and Senate approval, would move back the closings from 2003 as the Bush administration wanted, task force members still felt a need for urgency to secure funds and implement programs.

"If communities think there is more time, that would be a mistake," said Enid businessman and committee member Bob Berry. "If by the end of 2003, you haven't fixed what's wrong with your town, you're toast."

Berry read a report on what a new base closure committee may be looking for when considering which bases should remain open. The report comes from Berry's inquiries with Defense Department officials, he said. Berry said the issues deal with quality of life.

At the top of the list was common education, followed by, in order of importance, higher education and vo-tech; medical services; spouse employment; housing; air service; and community-based services such as recreation centers and churches.

The \$1.25 million requested for seed money could change as needs are assessed and more is revealed about the committee, its guidelines and word of which bases are being considered. Members said they could funnel more money where it is needed.

"If we knew Fort Sill was invulnerable and Vance and Altus

were vulnerable, I would vote to give them all the money," said retired Army Maj. Gen. Leo Baxter, a committee member from Lawton.

Members had considered asking for the use of state Rainy Day funds, but Rep. Ron Kirby D-Lawton, said those funds would not be available until at least June. After the last task force meeting in October where talk surfaced of asking for a special session, Gov. Frank Keating's office said it would consider the request when made, but opposed using Rainy Day funds.

Oklahoma's military facilities — Vance Air Force Base in Enid, Fort Sill in Lawton, Tinker Air Force Base in Midwest City, Altus Air Force Base and the McAlester plant — have survived previous base closure commissions.

Some bases have flourished

from other base closings, gaining additional operations. Tinker just completed the final phase of moving operations from Kelly Air Force Base in Texas, while McAlester gained the Army's Defense Ammunition Center from Savanna Army Depot in Illinois.

Committee members said money could be used to beef up a state facility's chances of gaining other operations. But first, they've got to keep them open.

"The next three years are the most important for Oklahoma military bases ever," Braddock said.

The McAlester meeting was the first to take place at one of the military facilities.

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# Enid vote supports air base

By Dawn Marks  
Enid Bureau

ENID — With the prospect of another round of base closures looming, Enid leaders basked Wednesday in the resounding vote of support for Vance Air Force Base.

Voters Tuesday gave 80.5 percent support for a ¼-cent sales tax to help improve Eisenhower Elementary, the school next to the base.

"We were very pleased, obviously. A 4-to-1 margin was better than we ever hoped for," said Jon Blankenship, Enid's chamber of commerce president. "It makes a very strong statement that Enid wants to do everything possible to keep Vance Air Force Base."

The seven-month tax will raise \$700,000 to help renovate the school and add four classrooms. The school system will pay for the remainder of the \$830,000 project.

Quality of the education system and its buildings is one of the categories communities are rated on during base closure studies.

Col. Doug Raaberg, wing commander of the 71st Flying Training Wing, said military leaders are thankful for the community support.

"We at Vance Air Force Base are elated with the opportunity to see Eisenhower improved," he said. "Enid has once again risen to the call. That's why we're glad to be part of the team here."

Quality education is among the first things military members look at before going to a community, and the better experience a family has in a community the better able the military is to keep those people, Raaberg said.

Plans by the school system to improve other schools also benefit military members, he said.

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